

PERMANENCE/TRANSCIENCE: THE AFTERLIVES
OF ANN HAMILTON'S INSTALLATIONS

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by

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"The truth is, she doesn't really believe that installations are meant to be owned, to be permanent, to live in someone's home like a porcelain cat."¹ Ann Hamilton's former gallerist Sean Kelly discusses here the difficulties of remembering a temporary artwork without compromising the qualities of the original work. For temporary artworks such as installation and performance, there is often a desire to exhibit documentation such as objects, photographs, videos, or preliminary sketches. Documentation is seen as a way to keep the memory of the temporary artwork alive. Additionally, for many artists who work in ephemeral forms, it can be a source of income necessary for the continuation of their practice.² Ann Hamilton, best known within the contemporary art world for her work in installation, also exhibits objects, some of which have appeared in her installations previously.³ She considers this re-exhibition of objects to be a major component of her body of work.

Hamilton's objects have been re-exhibited most notably in *Ann Hamilton*--the culmination of her 18-month residency at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Ohio--which traveled internationally from 1996-1999. Some of Hamilton's objects have also been exhibited in *a reading*, which marked the publication of new print series, one titled *ELOCUTION* and another made in conjunction with her installation *human carriage*.⁴ *A reading* traveled during 2013 and 2014 in the United States. Hamilton's objects are also featured on the artist's website

¹ Nancy Hass, "When Only a Museum Will Do: Installations No House Will Ever Hold," *New York Times*, August 9, 1998, Late edition, sec. 2.

² See Hass 1998. Hass is very interested in the commodification possible in Hamilton's work. Included are quotes from Hamilton's former gallerist Sean Kelly, with examples of how much money some of Hamilton's objects have sold for.

³ Hamilton's "objects" also include photographs and objects that are unrelated to the installations. She has also created some objects that are thematically related to the installations, but that did not play a role within them. Additionally, she also issues audio and video works from her installations. Some objects have been issued from installations, but have not been re-exhibited, to my knowledge. I will not be discussing these other types of objects in this essay.

⁴Elizabeth Leach Gallery, "Ann Hamilton: *a reading*," *Exhibitions*.
http://www.elizabethleach.com/Exhibit_Detail.cfm?ShowsID=259.

and have been inventoried by Joan Simon in her text *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*, whose title was chosen by Hamilton because the writing of the book enabled her to “take stock” of her work, finding connections between past works and ideas for new works.⁵

Scholars such as Joan Simon, Sarah Rogers, and Patricia C. Phillips have brought to our attention some of the benefits of these exhibits. They provide those who were unable to experience Hamilton’s installations with a chance to view some of the installations’ elements. They allow for an examination of Hamilton’s practice, by identifying and tracing trends through the course of her career. They provide an opportunity to pay greater attention to the details of the objects’ forms, for which the installations were not always favorable. They also try to achieve the impossible—bringing together works that were separated by time and space, and that no longer exist.⁶ How else, other than through documentation, could an artist such as Hamilton have a retrospective? But, it seems problematic that the qualities central to the objects within the installations are absent when they are shown again as sculptural works. Although scholars such as Simon, Rogers, and Phillips have begun to explore the relationship between Hamilton’s installations and objects, they have not sufficiently untangled the issues of embodied knowledge, interrelationships of installation elements, site-specificity, and the process of unmaking/remaking as they relate to the objects. It is worthwhile to explore these topics further.

Currently, little critical attention has been paid to Hamilton’s work in other media, which include prints, photographs, film, and audio. The objects central to this discussion are

⁵ Joan Simon, *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects* (New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2006), 4.

⁶ Ann Hamilton, *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton, 1984-1996* (Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, 1996), 8.

exhibited alongside and in a similar manner to Hamilton's other small-scale works, but also have a close relationship to the installations. Due to this in-between status, the objects discussed here are a good transition into a discussion about Hamilton's work in photography, film, and audio. In these media, Hamilton continues to explore themes prevalent throughout her career—language, the body, senses, and knowledge. For example, in her *face to face* series (2001), she places a small pinhole camera inside her mouth, holding her mouth open while facing another person for 5-20 seconds to capture his or her image. This series plays with a conflation of sight and speech while exploring direct acknowledgement between two people, a concept not previously addressed in her work. Her print series *reading* (2008) consists of scans of book pages marked by Hamilton while she read them, visually expressing the normally intangible and private act of reading.

For this essay, I have examined four installations—*the capacity of absorption* (1988), *privation and excesses* (1989), *lineament* (1994), and *human carriage* (2009)—and their afterlives as seen in a table (Fig. 1); a grouping of a hat, chair, and sheet (Fig. 2); balled threads of text referred to as book/balls (Fig. 3); and book fragments (Fig. 4), respectively. I concluded that when re-exhibited, the objects are cut off from the viewer and are presented to him or her as static artifacts through the use of plinths, vitrines, and spotlights, where before the viewer would have had a more interactive and multidimensional relationship with the objects.⁷ The

⁷ I have approached Hamilton's works by locating and researching photographs and videos, artist interviews and statements, and critical writings on her work. Regrettably, I have never had the opportunity to see any of Hamilton's installations in person. There are of course difficulties in writing about something I have never seen. In some cases, this situation is unavoidable. For example, *the capacity of absorption* took place before I was born. And even more questionable is the fact that I argue that the most valuable mode of viewing her work is in person. I am aware that it may cause some skepticism, which is why I preface my argument with this acknowledgement. However, I feel that this doesn't prohibit me from writing about her work, and neither from taking the stance that I do. Although I deal with the installations tangentially, my main focus is on the objects remaining after the

distinguishing qualities of Hamilton's installations are embodied knowledge, the felt relationships between elements, site-specificity, and the process of unmaking/remaking. These qualities are virtually absent in the objects when they are exhibited in isolation. The action and durational qualities that were so important when the objects were created are gone. Additionally, the interaction between the installations' performers and the objects is absent, and the objects instead become traces of a past activity.

What do the objects do now? In part, it is very dependent on the type of viewer: what he knows about Hamilton's work and how much of it he has experienced previously. To me, the objects are a testament to the installation and its performers, but the embodiment of action has been weakened. The objects, under this consideration, become more like relics. The objects arguably lack activation without the sounds, smells, and other sensory stimuli present in the installations and lack the body of the attendant or visitor they were designed to accompany. The way the objects are presented in *Ann Hamilton* and *a reading* is not conducive to revealing the objects' *initial* strengths. However, the objects are capable of functioning in many ways, and there are benefits to re-exhibiting them. In their new setting, the objects provide an opportunity for the viewer to step out of the immediacy of Hamilton's installations in order to observe individual objects in greater detail, and observe how the objects (once particular to their installations) now demonstrate broader themes and concepts.

Hamilton began working in the medium of installation in the 1980s and continues to work in it today. These large-scale, immersive works are based on her intuitive responses to the site's architecture as well as intensive research into the site's social, economic, and political

installations have been dismantled, their new environments created through exhibition methods, and how these methods affect the viewer's experience.

history. Due to this attentiveness to site, Hamilton's installations may be categorized as site-generated, rather than site-specific, the former type of work being much more dependent on site than the latter.⁸ Her installations can incorporate organic components and massive accumulations of objects or materials that create a sensually rich environment. Fabric or garments are sometimes referenced in her work, a reminder of her undergraduate degree in textiles. Her installations are often inhabited by an attendant who carries out a repetitive and even meditative task. Another common component is language, either in text or spoken aloud.

If we are to compare the re-exhibition of Hamilton's objects to the role they played in her installations, it is first necessary to determine how Hamilton's installations are perceived in the first place, and this in itself can be tricky.⁹ The term "installation" has never been neatly defined, but there are many working definitions.¹⁰ Hamilton's installations could be called experiential. Through them we understand that experience is not static or brief, but active and durational.¹¹ Hamilton asks her viewers to engage with and explore a space on a physical level, not to understand the concept behind a particular work, but to understand the nature of experience itself. Hamilton's installations are known for weaving together unusual combinations of elements to create a unified whole that is best experienced in person.¹² The inclusion of auditory and olfactory elements challenges us to understand an idea or an environment through senses beyond vision. Major components of the work are often

⁸ This distinction was first made by Robert Irwin, and has been applied to Hamilton's work by Joan Simon in *Ann Hamilton* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 13.

⁹ Simon has used the word "issuing" to describe Hamilton's process of determining which objects can stand on their own outside of the installation and be considered as their own works of art, at least semi-independent from the installation.

¹⁰ See Claire Bishop's *Installation Art: A Critical History* for one particularly coherent explanation of the medium.

¹¹ Alva Noe, "Experience and Experiment in Art," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, no. 8–9 (2000): 128.

¹² Hamilton, *The Body and the Object*, 18.

durational, meaning they manifest themselves over time. For example, Hamilton often uses material as a way to measure time. The objects that are unmade/remade by the attendants accumulate and can be used to gauge time. Also, Hamilton's organic materials often decompose or are consumed throughout the course of the installation.

The large scale and durational nature of Hamilton's installations called for the visitor's active participation and willingness to explore the installation. The installations could not be assessed through static vision, especially those constructed within alternative spaces such as houses. These installations inhabited multiple floors, requiring the visitor to move throughout the building.

Installation is often, but not always, site-specific, in that it is inextricably linked to the architecture or the space that it inhabits. Claire Bishop explains how the medium of installation differs from autonomous paintings or objects: "In a work of installation art, the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety. Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality."¹³ Meaning is not often located in one aspect of the installation, but is compounded through the visitor's movement and engagement with each element. Finally, installations are often not permanent, and are dismantled after a predetermined length of time.

The potential problems and benefits of re-exhibiting Hamilton's objects are part of a larger current conversation. In recent years alone, performance documentation has puzzled numerous scholars, including Boris Groys and Amelia Jones. Groys, in his article "Comrades of Time," champions time-based art for its ability to draw our attention to the present. Groys

¹³ Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

claims that the present is never constant, and even the past becomes unstable as we rewrite it. He believes that temporary exhibits are today more popular than the utopia of immortal knowledge, institutionalized by the museum and the archive. He describes how time is a series of present moments, and actions that highlight “now” can be seen as infinitely repetitive and unproductive. There are no conclusions or products because the action never ends. Hamilton’s time-based art is a good example of Groy’s infinitely repetitive action. When Hamilton’s attendants ball up strips of text, lower book bundles through the Guggenheim’s rotunda, or mold lumps of dough in their mouths, there is no indication of when the attendant is finished with the task or when he or she has reached a benchmark. Although there are material products of the action, there is no so-called “final product.”

Amelia Jones is another major participant in the performance documentation discourse. *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, which Jones edited, includes topics such as the inherent ephemerality of performance and the feasibility of a mnemonic or oral archive. Jones argues in her article “‘Presence’ in Absentia” that “there is no possibility of an unmediated relationship to any kind of cultural product.”¹⁴ In other words, being present at the first rendition of a performance does not guarantee a discernment of the performance’s “truth.” A visitor at the first rendition may have no understanding of the context of the performance, while someone viewing only the documentation may have more background knowledge (or vice versa). Without having seen Hamilton’s original installations, a visitor lacks important embodied knowledge. Jones would add, however, that the experience of the original

¹⁴ Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,” *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 12.

installation is mediated and incomplete, and Hamilton's documentation (the objects) provides valuable opportunities for understanding the work.

The complexities of performance remnants have also been grappled with by other contemporary artists like Joseph Beuys, Gordon Matta-Clark, and Janine Antoni. The performances and installations of Joseph Beuys, a German artist active in the 1960s and 70s, often resulted in what we could call remnants. Many of his late performances made use of chalkboards. Since their original use, the chalkboards have been exhibited on their own, valued as documentation of Beuys's performances, and for how they continue to express his ideas.¹⁵ *Wall Street Journal* newspapers delivered throughout his performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* were also saved and re-exhibited in *Content: A Contemporary Focus, 1974-1984* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, October 4, 1984-January 6, 1985, along with the artist's felt blanket, cane, gloves, and musical triangle.

Beuys believed that an installation or performance could not, by any means, be reconstructed at another place or time. He believed in a delicate interaction between the components and their environment and that the work was inseparable from its original context.¹⁶ When museums were interested in re-exhibiting components of *Strassenbahnhaltestelle* (1976) or *Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz* (1977), Beuys instructed that the items could not be rearranged in an attempt to replicate the original, but instead should be

¹⁵ They have been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, and the St. Louis Art Museum, among others.

¹⁶ Lizzie Frasco, "The Contingency of Conservation: Changing Methodology and the Theoretical Issues in Conserving Ephemeral Contemporary Artworks with Special Reference to Installation Art" (University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 69.

stacked or piled.¹⁷ The materials from *Honigpumpe* were also placed in the corner of the gallery, as a way to show that the work was over and the pieces discarded.¹⁸ The remnants from *I Like America* were re-exhibited similarly, with the felt blanket displayed in a pile, and the gloves, cane, triangle, and newspapers neatly arranged in a row in front of it.¹⁹ In Beuys's opinion, his original works have died.

If a complete recreation of an installation is one extreme, and Beuys's dismantling and piling of installation components is another, Hamilton would fall somewhere in the middle. She creates vignettes of her installations in lieu of full recreations. Hamilton's work also differs in that scholars do not see the original works as dead, but rather containing potential for the performers' actions to continue. The performers' actions are seen as infinite (while also guided by time), so an open chair is an invitation for someone to pick up the work of balling strips of text or wringing hands in honey.²⁰

Gordon Matta-Clark, an American "anarchitect" and photographer active in the 1960s and 70s, also struggled with the remnants of his artwork. Matta-Clark created commentary on New York's architecture and social relations by removing sections of abandoned buildings. Through destabilizing the architecture itself, Matta-Clark expressed a desire to remove barriers between people. Matta-Clark's work was frequently represented in galleries by the photographs he took of the sites. These photographs were a vital part of Matta-Clark's practice, as the sites themselves were often inaccessible or temporary, and accordingly Matta-Clark

¹⁷ *Strassenbahnhaltestelle* was re-exhibited at the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo and the Mönchengladbach Museum. *Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz* was re-exhibited at the Kunstmuseum in Bern.

¹⁸ Riet de Leeuw, "The Precarious Reconstruction of Installations," in *Modern Art: Who Cares?* (Amsterdam: Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art/ Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, 1999).

¹⁹ Howard N. Fox, Miranda McClintic, and Phyllis Rosenzweig, eds., *Content: A Contemporary Focus, 1974-1984* (Washington, D. C.: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984).

²⁰ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object*, 29.

worked to produce photographs that would most accurately capture the power of the sites. In other instances, Matta-Clark actually transported the removed sections of the buildings into the gallery.

Hamilton's installations, while temporary and in alternative spaces, were still more accessible than Matta-Clark's anarchitecture. Matta-Clark had to find a way to effectively make others aware of his work. He had to bring his work from the alternative to the gallery space more immediately than Hamilton had to because it was less likely that anyone saw the original. Exhibiting remnants was necessary if he wanted to enter into his present-day discourse.

One of Hamilton's contemporaries, Janine Antoni, also deliberates the relationship between an action and its material remnants. Antoni is an American sculptor and performance artist most active in the 1990s. Antoni uses her body as a tool to directly interact with materials such as chocolate, soap, or lard. The results of her actions—bites or licks, for example—are readily apparent on the resulting objects and can be seen as a type of mark-making. One of Antoni's main questions revolves around the remnants themselves: What can you learn about an action by looking only at the resulting product? Antoni hopes the remnants—such as lipsticks, chocolate boxes, or bars of soap—will be considered sculptures in their own right.

Hamilton has also displayed remnants as sculptures, but so far only within retrospectives; we have yet to see if she will display them in other types of exhibitions. Antoni and Hamilton also parallel each other when it comes to durational mark-making. They both see the remnants as documentation of an action. This can be seen in the unmaking and remaking of books in several of Hamilton's installations. However, in Antoni's work, the focus is slightly more weighted on the remnants than on the action (some of her performances were not

public), while in Hamilton's work, the passing of time in the creation of the remnants is just as important as, if not more than, the remnants themselves.

Joan Simon's *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects* gives the most attention to Hamilton's objects of any published text on Hamilton. Simon has described her text as the product of a decade-long conversation between herself and Hamilton; the book appears to be a collaborative project and a means for Hamilton to disseminate her thoughts on the objects. Simon sees the objects as just one of three equally important branches of Hamilton's practice, alongside installation and performance. She offers different explanations for the objects, including that they act as traces or relics—a "condensation" of the history and memory of the installation.²¹ Through Simon, Hamilton has expressed that the objects consolidate the relationships found in the installations.²² She has issued these objects because she believes that they can step out of the time and context of the installations.²³ According to Simon, Hamilton uses the objects as both conceptual and physical material for future installations. In these objects, we can see how Hamilton carries themes throughout her career and reuses forms, such as tables and chairs.

While Simon has written most extensively on Hamilton's objects, other valuable texts have been produced to accompany the exhibition *Ann Hamilton*. Sarah Rogers of the Wexner Center for the Arts in Ohio, the originating institution of the travelling exhibition, wrote *The Body and the Object*. Rogers argues that the re-exhibition of the objects takes a specific interpretation from within the installation and broadens it, giving it universal applications. In

²¹ Simon, *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*, 6.

²² Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, 12.

²³ Simon, *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*, 5.

addition to this, Rogers argues that the objects, which were often either the location or result of an activity, objectify and personify that action within themselves.²⁴ *The Body and the Object* states that Hamilton believes the objects have their own intrinsic associations and meanings, and do not serve as souvenirs of the installation they were part of.²⁵ She makes clear that the objects transcend the installations.²⁶

A catalogue, *Present-Past*, was also published by the Musee d'Art Contemporain de Lyon when *Ann Hamilton* was exhibited there in 1997. Patricia C. Phillips finds paradoxes within issues of temporality, scale, and meaning in Hamilton's work. The author claims that there was once a hierarchy in Hamilton's work between installations and smaller works such as objects, but that now all of Hamilton's projects are equivalent in meaning. Based on her own experience of viewing the objects, Phillips believes that the objects awaken memories of the installations and in doing so, encourage us to reconsider the meaning of Hamilton's work.

The way the objects are interpreted depends greatly on the type of visitor. Someone who experienced an original installation will be influenced by his memories. In some ways the objects are mnemonics – they aid in the remembrance of the installation. The visitor is still able to create new relationships with the objects, but his memories of the objects' previous lives create a more complex and layered experience than that had by someone who did not visit the original installation. However, his experience with the original installation may have been too brief or full of questions. When this is the case, viewing the objects a second time gives the visitor the opportunity to reassess the objects and make new connections.

²⁴ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object*, 24.

²⁵ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object*, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

One way the visitor's experience could be diminished was if he was not willing to devote a large amount of time to his visit. There is a need for patience, not only to pick up on subtleties of sound and light, but also to observe the durational nature of the work. Simon notes: "In this way, we take up the position that was Hamilton's when she began to research each project."²⁷ Recall, Hamilton intuitively responded to the site prior to planning the installation. When visitors take their time, they are able to attend to the nature of their experience. Amelia Jones, writing about the inevitability of mediated experience, states that being present for a work of performance art, for example, doesn't guarantee a more truthful understanding than if the performance was approached solely through a photograph.²⁸ Moving too quickly through the installation is one way in which the visitor's experience could be mediated.

Another way that the visitor's presence and receptivity can be hampered is through cell phone use. A photograph of Hamilton's most recent installation, *the event of a thread*, shows visitors lying on the ground under the focal point of the installation, a billowing white sheet (Fig. 5). Many of the visitors can be seen holding up cell phones to take photographs, presumably to post to social media sites. The presence of *the event of the thread* on social media has been documented by Zachary McCune, who demonstrates that thousands of visitors to the installation were simultaneously on Instagram or Twitter.²⁹ This phenomenon supports Jones's argument of the inevitable mediation of the viewer's experience and suggests that visitors do not necessarily have a more involved experience with Hamilton's objects in the context of their installations.

²⁷ Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, 21.

²⁸ Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," 12.

²⁹ Zachary McCune, "The Social Media Footprint of Ann Hamilton's Park Ave Armory Installation," *Hyperallergic*, January 17, 2013, <http://hyperallergic.com/63632/the-social-media-footprint-of-ann-hamiltons-park-ave-armory-installation/>.

On the other end of the spectrum is a visitor who has no prior knowledge of Hamilton or her installations. The level of context provided through didactics will influence the experience of this type of visitor. He may know that the objects are valued in part because of their pasts, but without enough context, the visitor may feel lost, although curious to learn more. He may interpret the objects solely as sculptural works. For this type of visitor, as well, the objects would not have the status of relics. Just like a non-religious person viewing a reliquary, he might feel respectful and curious, but not full of awe towards the objects.

Somewhere between these two extremes is a visitor who is knowledgeable about Hamilton's work but did not see the original installations. He is not coming to the objects as a blank slate and may not have to rely as much on didactic material to know about the objects' pasts. Despite this, he will still be forming his first impressions of the objects.

I am the third type of viewer, which is important to keep in mind as it determines how my conclusions should be qualified or limited. The objects' histories are very present in the way I understand the objects and our experience with them. When re-exhibited, the objects' new setting gives viewers a chance to step out of the immediacy of Hamilton's installations in order to observe the objects in greater detail, and observe how the objects now transcend the installations in order to demonstrate broader themes and concepts. Hamilton's installations, however, were ideal settings for the objects to demonstrate the qualities of embodied knowledge, felt relationships between elements, site-specificity, and the process of unmaking/remaking.

One quality of Hamilton's installations that the objects emphasized was site-specificity. *Privation and excesses* was one of Hamilton's particularly site-specific installations. *Privation*

and excesses was displayed at San Francisco's Capp Street Project. It was created in response to the particular situation of the area, "where displaced people circulated among commercial businesses. Walking around the area, Hamilton was frequently asked for money, and she remembers feeling self-conscious about pulling only pennies from her pocket."³⁰

The installation was composed of many elements, the most visually striking of which was the sea of pennies that covered the floor (Fig. 6). These were painstakingly arranged on a layer of honey to form a wave-like appearance.³¹ It is out over this sea of pennies that an attendant looked while she sat in a chair. The attendant repeatedly dunked her hands in a honey-filled hat, pulling them out and wringing them together, allowing the honey to drip back into the hat (Fig. 7). Across the pennies, the attendant would have looked out through the garage door that opened onto the neighborhood (Fig. 8). Behind the attendant's seat, on one side, was a pen of sheep. On the other were two motorized mortars and pestles, one grinding pennies, the other grinding human and animal teeth. The smell of honey, sheep, and copper permeated the space, as well as the sounds of the squelching honey, the sheep's baa-ing, and the mortars and pestles at work.

In the case of the chair, sheet, and honey-filled hat, their significance seems disrupted by their move away from Capp Street. The honey was used due to its associations with systems of economies, particularly the economy of bees. It, as well as the pennies (monetary economy) and the sheep (an exchangeable commodity of food, hide, and wool) were responses to the issues of poverty in the Capp Street area. What is this assemblage of objects in response to

³⁰ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object*, 29.

³¹ The pennies total \$7,500 and were mostly used to cover the expenses of the installation. The left over amount was donated to the community to support arts and education programs. Ann Hamilton, *Ann Hamilton: Present-Past, 1984-1997* (Milan: Skira, 1999), 124.

now? Hamilton argues that the objects still resonate with the relationships that existed in the original installations, but removed from their context, the chair, sheet, and hat look oddly out of place and it is not clear that they were a response to the Capp Street area.³² Additionally, the attendant's interaction with the objects—the wringing of hands in honey—evoked either a greedy or despairing gesture, again in response to issues of wealth and need in the Capp Street area. The objects now appear as artifacts of a past environment and activity. We can recall the way the objects used to work in their original location, but once moved to the gallery, our experience is altered.

The objects were as closely intertwined with the installations' other elements as they were with their original sites. In Hamilton's installations, the work is created through the juxtaposition of elements. Hamilton has argued that the objects she chooses to "live on" after the installation are those which are representative of the relationships or associations central to the installation.³³ I would argue, however, that the intention of the installations was not for a visitor to interact with a single element. As opposed to a room installed with paintings, which could be seen as relatively autonomous from one another and could be taken away and displayed elsewhere, an installation is one cohesive work. If the elements were to be separated, the work would be considered destroyed or dismantled. Hamilton explains that when a visitor enters one of her installations, he or she is not "entering an object relationship of you to a thing, but of you to a relational space."³⁴

³² Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, 12.

³³ Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, 12.

³⁴ Amei Wallach, "A Conversation with Ann Hamilton in Ohio," *American Art* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 67.

The juxtaposed elements can be ephemeral like light, air movement, color, sound, and smell, or more concrete like the architecture, objects, or the attendant. The juxtapositions build up as the visitor moves through the space, enriching the experience. It is a journey, but not a narrative; instead it is a multi-layered discovery slowly understood as the visitor encounters different elements.³⁵ Another way of thinking about this experience is as a rhythm between senses or activities. In an interview with Krista Tippett at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Hamilton shared her memories of knitting or doing needlepoint while her grandmother read to her: "...there's something about the rhythm of the hands being busy and then your body falls open to absorb and concentrate on what you're listening to, but not completely, because you have two concentrations. And then from that, that sort of cultivates a kind of attention. That is the rhythm of those two things together. So the unfolding of the voice in space, and then the material accreting under your hand, and they have really different satisfactions."³⁶ Similarly, a visitor in one of Hamilton's installations would experience a rhythm between many "concentrations." Additionally, not every element can be seen at one time. Things move in and out of view as the visitor moves throughout the space. The core of the experience is all the elements working in concert, rather than any one particular element. Hamilton has said, "...more important than the things themselves is the way they come into relation."³⁷

Hamilton's installation *the capacity of absorption* demonstrates how the interrelationships of elements are often at the core of her work. *The capacity of absorption* was Hamilton's first major solo exhibition. It was on display at the Temporary Contemporary, now

³⁵ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton, 1984-1996*, 23.

³⁶ Krista Tippett, "Ann Hamilton - Making, and the Spaces We Share," *On Being* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts, February 13, 2014), onbeing.org/program/transcript/6148.

³⁷ Simon, *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*, 8.

the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The installation was a series of three rooms. A large megaphone form—based on a 17th century design by Athanasius Kirchner—hung from the center of the first room (Fig. 9). Glasses of loudly swirling water were mounted on the walls of the first room. The visitor had the opportunity to speak into the megaphone. One would expect that this would increase the room’s noise level, but the louder the visitor spoke, the quieter the water vortexes became. Also featured on the megaphone was a small inset video screen that showed water pouring over an ear (Fig. 10).

A table sat in the middle of the second room. The center of the table was depressed and filled with a layer of smooth water. The table had two sets of finger holes, for a total of 20 finger holes (Fig. 11). One set appeared at the head of the table and the other was nearby, along one side. The set at the head of the table was occupied by a standing attendant, seemingly permanently (Fig. 12). His trance-like state could possibly arouse the curiosity of the visitor. The visitor had the opportunity to join in the attendant’s experience by placing his or her fingers into the second set of holes. Only through this physical contact would the visitor learn that the table’s glassy quality was due to water and not varnish.³⁸

The attendant’s coat trailed into the third room, where it was attached to a large buoy (Fig. 13). The surface of this buoy was covered in phrenology maps, historically used to determine one’s personality from the shape of one’s brain. The walls of the third room were oppressively colored with graphite, and the floor was loosely covered in Linotype slugs (Fig. 14).³⁹ The slugs shifted and rattled under the visitors’ feet as the visitor moved throughout the

³⁸ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton, 1984-1996*, 23.

³⁹ Linotype slugs are rectangular pieces of metal with raised text that were used for typesetting in the 19th and 20th centuries.

room. The installation yielded the greatest satisfaction to those who experienced it through time and space.

The layout of this installation—spread between three adjoining rooms—creates an ideal atmosphere for the elements to come into relation. Each room is distinct and offers the visitor something new, but the visitor can still find connections between them. The alignment of the open doorways across the installation facilitates the visitor's ability to experience elements of multiple rooms at once (Fig. 15). If the visitor chose to touch the wet surface of the table in the second room, he may have drawn connections to the water vortexes in the first room or to the walls in the second room that were stained with a high-water mark and algae. As the visitor explored the third room, he would have heard the Linotype slugs rattling below, the chirping of live crickets from a cage set high in the wall of the second room, and the swirling water from the first room. He could have also heard other visitors speaking into the megaphone in the first room. The visitor may have also found significance in the way the walls changed throughout: from the vortexes arranged like notes on sheet music, to the algae stain, to the dark graphite coating. As the visitor moved throughout the space, his experience evolved each time he made a new discovery. His observations of each room built up in layers as he progressed.

In *privation and excesses* as well, associations made from one element are weak relative to the understanding granted by experiencing all the elements in concert. The shimmering sea of pennies, the sheep, the scent of honey, and the attendant's activity played off of each other, allowing the visitor to strengthen or expand the associations they made with one element alone. Therefore, although displaying the honey-filled hat allows us to think about the economy

of bees through the presence of the honey, it does very little to encapsulate the relationships seen in the installation as a whole.

Just as the table from *the capacity of absorption* and the chair/sheet/hat from *privation and excesses* are exhibited in isolation from their installations' other elements, so too is a book fragment from *human carriage*. *Human carriage* was part of the Guggenheim's show *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia: 1860-1989* that invited artists to reflect on Asian influence on American artists. Hamilton's installation utilized the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda. The book fragments were made of strips of books cut up and rearranged in different combinations. The spines were connected so that the strips splayed out and intermingled. The fragments were hung from the spines by strings. Near the top of the rotunda, an attendant connected these bundles of book fragments to a pulley system that lowered them to the base of the rotunda (Fig. 16). The attendant then set loose a carriage that traveled down and around the spiral of the parapet (Fig. 17). Attached to the carriage were two Tibetan cymbals that rang intermittently as the carriage traveled around the rotunda (Fig. 18). At some point, which varied each instance due to the weight of the bundle and the speed of the carriage, the bundle was dropped at the bottom of the rotunda. These bundles accumulated in a pile throughout the course of the installation (Fig. 19).

This installation spanned throughout the rotunda in every direction. The carriage travelled in a complete circle and went past all floors (Fig. 20). The movement helped to draw the visitor's eyes up the full height of the rotunda. In this way Hamilton's installation compliments the architecture instead of disregarding it. The sound of the cymbals would have struck the curiosity of many of the visitors, regardless of whether or not they were there to see

that particular installation. The sounds would have echoed through the vast space. This installation was very successful at utilizing the whole space, and is a strong example of how Hamilton emphasizes auditory and mobile elements in her work. The sounds of the cymbals and the movements of the carriage and the book bundles, each in their own paths, would have been experienced in tandem. The action of the attendant at the top of the rotunda and the book bundles falling at the bottom of the rotunda would have come together in a rhythm. This is the kind of rhythm that Hamilton described as part of her experience of reading and knitting with her grandmother. It is a coming together of many sensations at once in such a way that it enhances the experience and allows you to find personal significance. Hamilton describes the experience as “...shaped by the serendipitous coincidences taking place around you and how those align with or give meaning to what you are doing. The engagement is just another way to allow oneself to be present.”⁴⁰

These examples demonstrate how Hamilton tries to create a space and a situation that allows visitors to be aware of the multitude of sensations surrounding them. The interaction between elements is also important because it often resulted in the objects’ activation. The objects shown in *Ann Hamilton* and *a reading* appear dormant without activators such as touch, sound, odor, or the presence of an attendant. They are displayed in vitrines, on plinths, or hung on the wall (Fig. 21). Of course, there is nothing unusual about these display methods. But through them, the objects are isolated from the viewer. These objects appear lifeless or stagnant because they lack the activation possible through contact with the attendants and/or visitors.

⁴⁰ foconow, “Brilliant Return: Interview with Ann Hamilton,” *Foconow*, August 11, 2012, <http://foconow.com/2012/08/11/brilliant-return-interview-with-ann-hamilton/>.

In Hamilton's installations, bodies—either of attendants or visitors—activated many of the objects. Throughout Hamilton's career, she has emphasized a connection between objects and the body. This connection was already evident in one of her earliest projects, a series of photographs called the *body object* photographs (1984). In this series, Hamilton was photographed with a variety of objects replacing body parts to create a hybrid form of part living thing, part object (Fig. 22).⁴¹ In these photographs, she "uses her own body as structure, surface, and as site to be animated."⁴² This investigation is continued in many of Hamilton's installations, in which objects lead to the discovery of new associations. This is true for many of the chairs and tables. Through its accommodation of a body, the table from *the capacity of absorption* also enhanced the visitor's experience. The visitor's physical relationship with the table was a way for his or her experience to be enriched. The table served as a link in a chain that led the visitor to a more complete understanding of his environment. The visitor could interact with the table to understand the object itself, to commune with the attendant, or even to heighten his senses as he accepted the risk of engaging with the object.

Another way that this object was activated was through sound. There were two predominant sounds in *the capacity of absorption*: the swirling water in the first room and the crickets in the second room. The water and cricket sounds, enhanced by the oppressive scale and overall strangeness of the installation, created a feeling of unease when the visitor interacted with the table. The visitor, not knowing what would happen, took a risk when he

⁴¹ Madeline Schwartzman, *See Yourself Sensing: Redefining Human Perception* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 16.

⁴² Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, 17.

placed his fingers in the holes. The visitor didn't know if there was something dangerous or unpleasant inside the holes.

The presence of the attendant is a major factor in the activation of the table. Coming upon a lone stranger who refuses to acknowledge the visitor's presence, but instead focuses determinedly upon the task at hand, may have been an intense experience for the visitor. The attendant's concentrated pose would then draw the visitor's attention to the table. Upon touching the table, the visitor and attendant could have a shared experience, resulting in a feeling of communion.⁴³ As Phillips shares, the objects displayed in *Ann Hamilton* "seem abandoned" by their attendants.⁴⁴ The objects could no longer be a site of interaction with the attendant.

The still life of chair, sheet, and hat was also activated within *privation and excesses* through sound and the presence of the attendant, and additionally through smell.⁴⁵ Although the honey-filled hat would still have had a smell when it was re-exhibited in *Ann Hamilton*, the smell in *privation and excesses* would have been even more overwhelming, because honey also created the base for the sea of pennies. Another inevitable smell during the installation would have been that of the live sheep.

Due to the omission of *privation and excesses'* other elements from *Ann Hamilton*, the chair, sheet, and hat appear dormant, like artifacts. The "world" that they inhabited is gone, and they only stand as a silent testimony of the richness that once existed. In the exhibition *Ann Hamilton*, the honey sat stagnant in the hat, but it was activated by the attendant in *privation*

⁴³ It is worth mentioning that *the capacity of absorption* is Hamilton's only installation that allows the visitor to participate in the same activity as the attendant.

⁴⁴ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton, 1984-1996*, 29.

⁴⁵ The phrase "still life" is used by Simon to describe set-ups of chairs and/or tables where an attendant carried out an activity during the installation.

and excesses as she constantly wrung her hands. Squelching, sticky noises accompanied this action, as well as the noises of the sheep and the mortars and pestles. Among these unusual sounds and smells, the activity of a person sitting quietly and carrying out a repetitive task would have appeared bizarre, making it likely to draw the visitor's attention and capture his interest.

Showing Hamilton's objects isolated from their installations is a drastic change not only because of the lack of other elements, but also because of the lack of durational qualities. Some of Hamilton's objects accumulated steadily over the course of their installations. These objects were a way to materially manifest the elusiveness of time. This was characteristic of the book bundles in *human carriage*, which accumulated at the bottom of the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda. It was the overall effect—the accumulation and size of the pile—that was important, rather than any one particular book fragment.

In addition to accumulating, some of Hamilton's objects were altered over time. Through the action of the attendant, these objects were “unmade”—deconstructed or emptied of content. The process of this transformation added layers to the objects' significance, but the viewer could only see the final state of the objects when they were re-exhibited. The books from *indigo blue* (1991) and *tropos* (1993) and the embroidered gloves from *kaph* (1997) are among the objects that have been unmade in Hamilton's installations. Here I will focus on the deconstruction of books and their reconstruction into book/balls in *lineament* (1994), which have not only been unmade, but also physically reconfigured into a new form.

In *lineament*, held at the Ruth Bloom Gallery in Santa Monica, California, an attendant sat on a swing at one end of a table in the gallery (Fig. 23). She worked behind a small cloth

“triptych” set up on the table. A book was laid open in front of her, whose lines of text were cut out in such a way that when pulled out of the book, they formed one continuous strand of text. The attendant removed these strands and rolled them into spheres, almost like balls of yarn, throughout the course of the installation (Fig. 24). As the book/balls were completed, they were passed through the screen to the other half of the table. Whenever a book was “emptied” of text, the attendant placed the book’s cover, still containing the margins of the pages, in a box underneath her feet. Light streamed through a small pinhole in one wall onto the attendant at work. The attendant’s shadow was cast onto both the cloth screen and the opposing wall. The walls of the room were covered in plywood, which was later used to construct crates to hold and display the objects—one for the book/balls and another for the emptied covers—during the run of *Ann Hamilton* (Fig. 25).

Exhibited in these crates, without the presence and action of the attendant, the book/balls are static traces. The process was the core quality of the book/balls. As Susan Brandoli describes it, “Hamilton isolates movement for its own sake. It is the act in itself that contains meaning, the ‘accretion of gesture’ once again. This is an originary gesture. Each repetition is a presence in and of itself, yet never quite the same—a beginning and an ending, both the first and last time.”⁴⁶ As Simon has explained, Hamilton’s most crucial material is time.⁴⁷ Hamilton’s installations are a way for her and those who take the time to explore her installations to better understand an idea through a durational experience. The attendant’s action in *lineament* is one example of Hamilton’s exploration into the disruption of language.

⁴⁶ Susan Brandoli, “A Necessary Violence: Deconstructing Ann Hamilton’s Tropos” (Conference paper presented at the Negotiating the Liminal: Moving Between and Beyond Boundaries, Barriers & Borderlands, Roger Communication Centre, Ryerson University, Toronto, March 15, 2008), 4.

⁴⁷ Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, 14.

The process of deconstructing the books and reforming them into balls is a way for Hamilton to dismantle text and transform it into something incomprehensible. The association of language coming undone is more strongly evident to the viewer when he is able to see the process and not just its traces.

Although they do not promote an embodied understanding, the re-exhibition of the unmade objects does have some advantages. The unmade objects are demonstrations of the individual eccentricities of each attendant. This can be seen in the slight differences in the burning of text in *tropos*, the erasing of text in *indigo blue*, and the formation of book/balls in *lineament*. Patricia C. Phillips says, “Their original intent subverted, the books are poignant evidence of the vagaries and intricacies of human touch—the ungovernable dimensions of the most repetitious work...The books are testimonies to the fragilities of routine and the mysteries of the commonplace.”⁴⁸

The dialogue between the book/balls’ two forms is similar to that between Robert Smithson’s non-sites and sites, in that the objects become powerful through a palpable absence—in Hamilton’s case, the absence of action, the attendant, and the original surroundings. They describe the installation through the ways that they are unable to represent it, and they create an unfulfillable desire to return to the installation.

Robert Smithson was an American artist active in the 1960s and early 1970s. Some of his most well-known works are called “non-sites”: philosophical, minimalistic sculptures that created a dialogue with landscapes such as industrial sites, quarries, and mines. Smithson documented these landscapes by displaying a map or photograph of the site on the wall,

⁴⁸ Hamilton, *Ann Hamilton: Present-Past, 1984-1997*, 122.

accompanied by raw geological material from the site on the floor in a container whose abstract, geometric shape mirrored that of the map or photograph. Smithson was fixated on the disintegration and chaos of the universe, but nonetheless attempted to create order through his land projects.

Viewing the non-sites can create in the viewer an urge to travel to the site. This desire cannot be fulfilled because the site is absent and unattainable. The absence of the site has a weight and palpable presence in the gallery. In this way, Smithson is not exhibiting the non-sites, but the absence of the sites. This unfulfillable desire sets up a dialogue or tension between the site and the non-site.

The feeling of displacement is intentional in Smithson's work, as he is utilizing the tension to make a statement about the gap between art and nature. To Smithson, nature is to art as site is to non-site. Just as the non-site at first glance seems to be representing the site, yet fails to represent its central qualities, so does art fail to fully represent nature. Smithson is demonstrating that art in the gallery is restrictive or lacking compared to nature. This challenges the view that art adds something to nature through the artist's interpretation. Smithson described the difference between art and nature through a series of opposing characteristics, such as closed/open, bound/unbound, finite/infinite, indoor/outdoor, and stable/chaotic. These considerations reveal the limitations of art and the gallery space.

Similarly, Hamilton's objects are bound works in the gallery space that echo Hamilton's installations. Keep in mind that this interpretation is only likely if the viewer has knowledge of Hamilton's previous work. The installations' dynamism is made more apparent through the objects' stasis, and just like Smithson's sites, the installations are inaccessible, creating an

unfulfillable desire to travel to the origin of the work. Through their ephemerality, Hamilton's works also share the palpability of absence evoked by Smithson's non-sites. From the temporary nature of many of her works to the incorporation of deteriorating organic elements, Hamilton's work can be aptly described using the Japanese concept of "mono no aware," which roughly translates to "the beauty of short-lived things." The beauty of ephemerality highlighted in Hamilton's work demonstrates that the power of absence is intentional in Hamilton's objects just as it is in Smithson's non-sites. Despite the many similarities, Smithson was deeply interested in entropy and the chaos of the universe; absence and art's failure to represent nature were very central to his work. In Hamilton's case, the ability to feel the absence of the installation is one conclusion when viewing the objects, but that conclusion was not Hamilton's main goal.

It is also important to note the change in setting between the original installations and the re-exhibited objects. Hamilton's installations created immersive experiences. They transformed the space they inhabited and created landscapes ripe for exploration. When visitors entered into one of her installations, it must have been like stepping into another world. Hamilton is known for being very thorough in her transformation of the space, usually altering the light sources, walls, and floors.

In contrast, the museum or gallery space can feel very clinical. Rather than being immersed in the space, the visitor may feel distant from the objects, which are displayed on plinths, in glass cases, or hung from the wall. In some ways they are like specimens for the visitor to view. The interaction with the objects in this setting is less dynamic. The museum or gallery space is also less likely to give the visitor the feeling that they have been transported

somewhere unexpected. This setting, however, can be better suited for analyzing common themes and forms throughout Hamilton's body of work or analyzing the formal qualities of the objects. In the multi-sensory and immersive settings of the original installations, it may have been challenging to focus on only one element. Considered this way, *Ann Hamilton* and *a reading* are not exhibitions of objects, but of themes and forms illustrated through objects.

The words "fluid" and "fixed" encapsulate one of the most critical ways in which the two settings differ. Gallery settings are fixed in that conservators, some of the museum's most essential professionals, are tasked with preserving artworks in an unchanged state (with some exceptions) so that they can be enjoyed and studied for many years. Contact with the objects is minimized, and temperature, light, and humidity levels are carefully monitored.

Hamilton's installations are fluid in both general and specific ways. In general, change is expected and welcomed in those environments, especially considering the vast number of variables within any one installation. Many of her installations included live animals, food, or plants—elements that don't "play nice" with the traditional rules of museum conservation. More specifically, with objects like the book/balls, the act of transforming the material is pivotal. In the case of the book/balls, Hamilton is not primarily interested in the final form of the object or the craftsmanship; she is interested in the unmaking/remaking of the book, and thereby the deconstruction/reformulation of language.

One way that the objects stimulate interest now is through their histories, rather than through change or transformation. As they relate to their originating installations, one of their functions is like that of cultural artifacts, such as the last suit Abraham Lincoln wore, or items that sunk with the Titanic. They serve a documentary purpose, and allow us to better

understand a past event. Like an artifact, the object has value because of its authenticity. Viewing the chair, sheet, and hat when it is re-exhibited purportedly tells us something about the installation, simply because those objects were present in it. They act as a testimony to the installation's existence in the past.

However, as the objects relate to more recent works or overarching themes and questions in Hamilton's work, they are *in time*, remaining active long after their installations are dismantled. They do this through the way that Hamilton uses forms and objects repeatedly. Hamilton, like many other artists, is seeking to explore a question or series of questions throughout her career, and the reuse of objects or forms is evidence that she is maintaining this open dialogue. Objects such as tables, chairs, or books serve as motifs, whose associations are expanded or complicated. One or two installations alone would not be enough to fully explore the potential of these forms. For example, tables have appeared in numerous Hamilton installations, including *the capacity of absorption*, *indigo blue*, *malediction*, *tropos*, and *lineament*, just to name a few. Hamilton says, "The table is my landscape. The table is always there. How I describe it to myself: It's not the altar, but it always implies a social space. It's a place of work, a place of solitary study, or exchange; it's where you eat, where everything happens. To me it's like the icon of social exchange."⁴⁹ Through the reuse of forms, the objects are successful at demonstrating how Hamilton's themes and questions are carried throughout her body of work.

The objects are also "in time" for the viewer. Consider a hypothetical viewer who visited *malediction* in 1991 and also *tropos* in 1993, both of which feature an attendant at a table. The

⁴⁹ Amei Wallach, "A Conversation with Ann Hamilton in Ohio," *American Art* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 70.

way the viewer now considers the table in *malediction* may be influenced by their memories of the table and its use in *tropos*. Thinking about multiple installations in tandem can allow the viewer to draw new connections between Hamilton's works. These "remnants" will continue to have an active presence as Hamilton produces more work. With each reuse of the form, the personal significance that a visitor finds with any individual object grows and changes.

Hamilton has attempted to reintroduce some elements of the installations to the objects in their new settings, but these additions are shadows of their original manifestations. Every time the chair, sheet, and hat from *privation and excesses* are exhibited, the hat is refilled with honey in order to "evoke the potential of the gesture that was key to the installation."⁵⁰ The refilling of the hat with honey acts like a trigger to remind viewers of how this grouping of objects functioned in the past, including the attendant's wringing action. Audio was reintroduced to another "still life"—the table, chair, basket, and bread molds from *malediction* (1992) (Fig. 26). In *malediction*, Hamilton stuffed handfuls of bread dough into her mouth and then placed them (now in mouth-shaped molds) in a large basket shaped as a 19th-century casket (Fig. 27). The audio that was played in the original installation (Hamilton's voice reading passages from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* and *The Body Electric*) was reincorporated when the still life was shown in *Ann Hamilton*. Hamilton says this was an effort to reintroduce the human element to the collection of objects.⁵¹

By comparing the objects' presence within and without the installations and analyzing the artist's stated goals, I have demonstrated that the objects lack activation without the sounds, smells, and other sensory stimuli present in the installations. Many also lack the body

⁵⁰ Simon, *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*, 6.

⁵¹ Simon, *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*, 18.

of the attendant or visitor they originally accompanied. Additionally, the process of the objects' unmaking/remaking and other durational changes were essential to the installations, and the performer's action figured prominently in the way that the visitor understood the objects. Displayed as they have been, the objects become traces.

Through my examination of Hamilton's objects, it becomes clear that the shift in the objects' settings and the paring down of elements causes us to approach the objects with a different set of goals, and consequently we have a different kind of experience. The experiences can be described as phenomenological versus conceptual; is preference given to an experience or to an idea? In the installations, embodied experience with the objects was more likely; the experience was multi-sensory and durational. When re-exhibited, vision is the most useful sense when interacting with the objects. The recent exhibits are more about concepts than personal experiences. The installations created opportunities for visitors to trust their bodies as sources of knowledge, but when viewing the static and isolated objects, experience again becomes visual. The objects, initially, were closely intertwined with their installations because of the participant's embodied knowledge, interrelationships of installation elements, site-specificity, and the process of unmaking/remaking.

Hamilton's goal has been to create spaces that encourage learning beyond the visual or linguistic. The curators of Hamilton's installation *myein* describe it so: "In moving beyond passive visual consumption we become active agents in the construction of meaning."⁵² Through this analysis, I have shown that this condition is true not only for Hamilton's installations, but for her objects as well. An experience is possible with these objects, but it is a

⁵² Ann Hamilton, Helaine Posner, and Katy Kline, *Ann Hamilton: Myein: The United States Pavilion, 48th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, June 12th-November 7, 1999* (S.I.: Katy Kline and Helaine Posner, 1999), 48.

mainly visual experience as opposed to the embodied experience possible within the installations. Although the objects' initial strengths are not revealed in *Ann Hamilton and a reading*, these more recent exhibitions provide opportunities for the viewer to figuratively step out of the sensory profusion of Hamilton's installations in order to closely observe or reconsider the objects, and observe how the objects transcend the boundaries of their installations in order to demonstrate broader concepts. This critical analysis of the objects also helps us to understand Hamilton's installations—how they are experienced and how the objects facilitate that experience.

Hamilton appears to be creating an increasing amount of work outside of installation, such as text-based works and photographs. Current literature has focused too exclusively on Hamilton's installations, and it is time to examine her other modes of working as well. The objects I have examined clearly retain a strong link to Hamilton's installation work, but by making her work outside of installation more visible and of interest to future scholars, this essay can serve as a bridge to future study of her work in other media.

In *The Body and the Object*, Rogers considers the conflict between permanence and impermanence: "With each installation, the artist carefully considers if an independent object will survive the temporary work to stand as its own container of meaning, not as a souvenir."⁵³ Through this essay I have made clear that these objects cannot possibly extend the life of Hamilton's installations; they cannot function as souvenirs. Hamilton's installations are not sellable commodities, the "porcelain cats" that Hamilton's gallerist Kelly describes. They are not because the installations' central qualities of embodied knowledge, interrelationships of

⁵³ Hamilton, *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton, 1984-1996*, 16.

installation elements, site-specificity, and the process of unmaking/remaking are absent in the more sculptural isolated objects. However, the collection and display of Hamilton's objects is beneficial both for those familiar and unfamiliar with Hamilton, and they encourage continued discussion of her work, ephemeral or otherwise.



Fig. 1
untitled (the capacity of absorption), 1988
 wooden table, pump, water
 36 ¼" x 27 ¼" x 17'
 Collection The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA



Fig. 2
untitled (privation and excesses), 1989
 metal chair, felt hat, cloth, honey
 33 ½" x 18 ½" x 17 ½"
 Collection Mr. and Mrs. Marc Brutten, Delmar, CA



Fig. 3

untitled (lineament), 1994

ball wound from strips of text, book, wood and glass vitrine

15 editions with 4 artist's proofs. Published in 1994 by Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

12 ½" x 28 ½" x 5 1/2" (vitrine)



Fig. 4
near-away, 2013
 paperback book slices, cheese cloth, string,
 bookbinders glue
 Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR



Fig. 5
the event of a thread, 2012-13
 installation view
 Park Avenue Armory, New York, NY



Fig. 6
privation and excesses, 1989
 installation view
 Capp Street Project, San Francisco, CA



Fig. 7
privation and excesses, 1989 (details)
 Capp Street Project, San Francisco, CA



Fig. 8
privation and excesses, 1989
 installation view
 Capp Street Project, San Francisco, CA



Fig. 9
the capacity of absorption, 1988-89, installation view, room one of three
 Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (previously the Temporary Contemporary)



Fig. 10
untitled (the capacity of absorption), 1988
 video, silent, 30 minutes (loop), color toned image
 Pioneer 2600 laser disc player, Sharp LCD 6M-40U screen
 3 ½" x 4 ½" (screen)



Fig. 11
untitled (the capacity of absorption), 1988
 wooden table, pump, water
 36 ¼" x 27 ¼" x 17'
 Collection The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA



Fig. 12
the capacity of absorption, 1988-89, installation view, room two of three
 Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (previously the Temporary Contemporary)

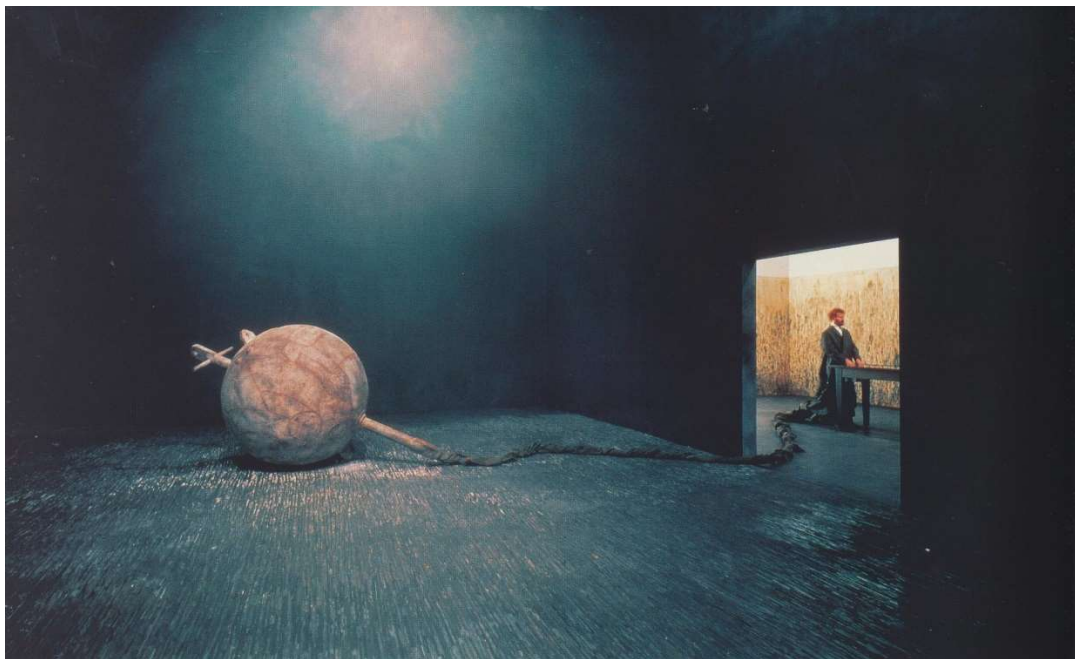


Fig. 13
the capacity of absorption, 1988-89, installation view, room three of three
 Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (previously the Temporary Contemporary)

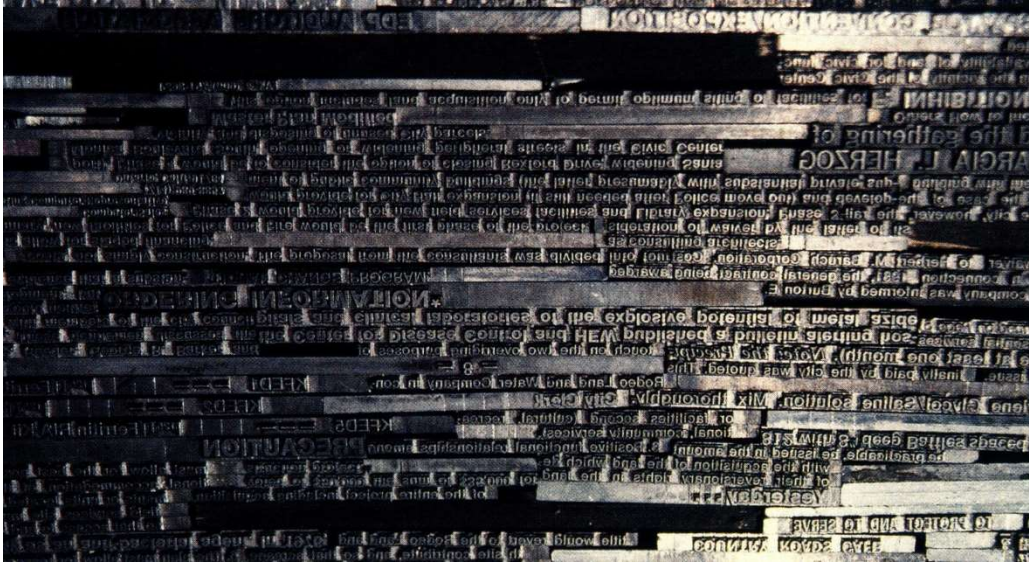


Fig. 14

the capacity of absorption, 1988-89, room three of three
(detail, Linotype floor)

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (previously the Temporary Contemporary)



Fig. 15

the capacity of absorption, 1988-89, installation view, room three of three
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (previously the Temporary Contemporary)



Fig. 16
human carriage, 2009 (detail)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, NY



Fig. 17
human carriage, 2009
 installation view
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, NY

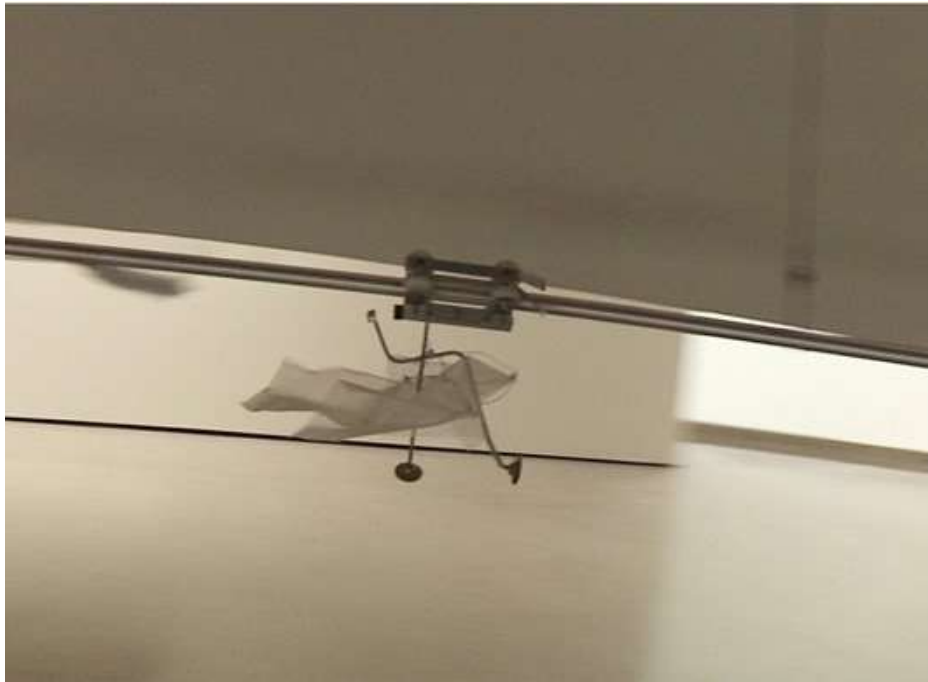


Fig. 18
human carriage, 2009 (detail)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, NY



Fig. 19
human carriage, 2009
 installation view
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, NY



Fig. 20
human carriage, 2009
 installation view
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, NY

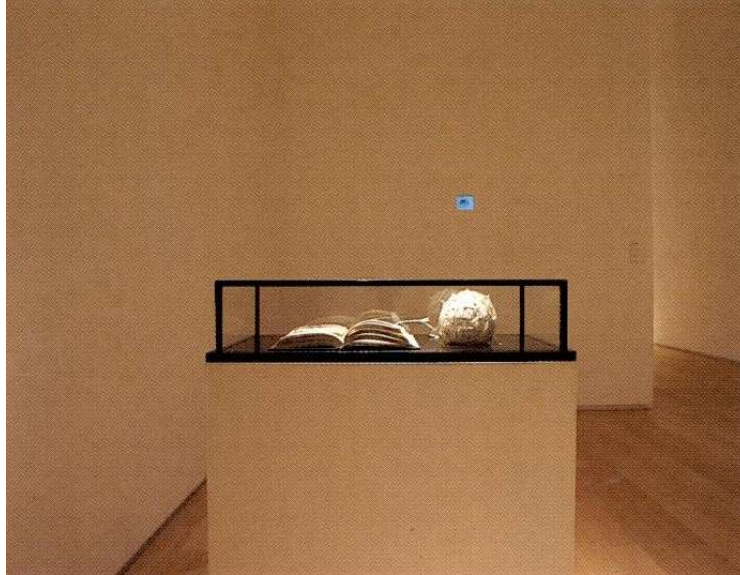


Fig. 21
untitled (lineament), 1994
 ball wound from strips of text, book, wood and glass vitrine
 15 editions with 4 artist's proofs. Published in 1994 by Sean Kelly Gallery, New York
 12 ½" x 28 ½" x 5 1/2" (vitrine)

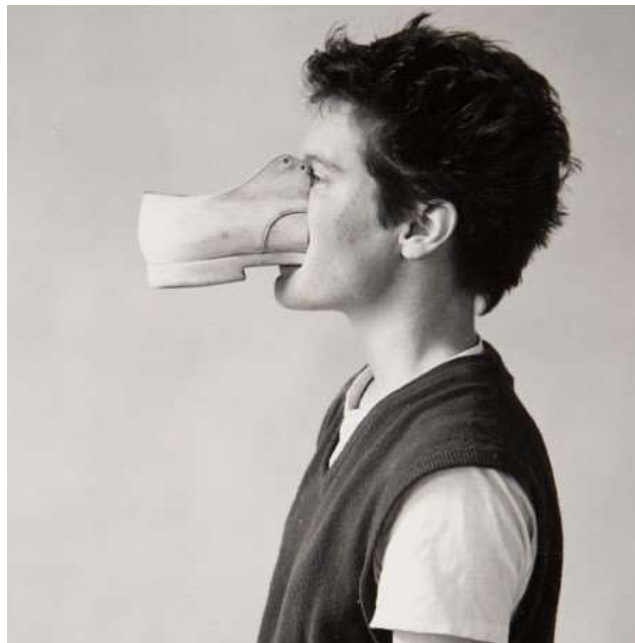


Fig. 22
body object series #3 – shoe, 1984/1991
 black and white photograph
 10 editions with 3 artist's proofs. Published in 1991 by Louver Gallery, New York
 4 3/8" x 4 3/8" (image)



Fig. 23
lineament, 1994
 installation view
 Ruth Bloom Gallery, Santa Monica, CA



Fig. 24
lineament (detail)
 Ruth Bloom Gallery, Santa Monica, CA



Fig. 25

untitled (lineament), 1994

2 wood boxes; 29 altered books; 55 balls wound from strips of text; 16 mm film, color, silent, 20 minutes (loop); projector

Collection Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL



Fig. 26

untitled (malediction), 1991

wooden table and chair, wicker casket, bowl, bread dough mouth molds, audiotape, compact disc, compact disc player, mounted car speaker concealed behind a wall

34" x 30" x 132"

Collection Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI



Fig. 27
malediction, 1991-92
installation view
Louver Gallery, New York

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